

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1-8, 10-14, 16-49 and 51-62 are pending in the application. Claim 15 is canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. Claims 9, 31 and 50 were previously canceled. Claims 63-66 are added. Claims 1, 17-22, 33, 45, 47 and 48 are amended. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Prior to the filing of this RCE, claims 1-8, 10-30, 32-35, 37, 38, 42-45 and 47-62 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Tsubaki et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,790,742, or Tsubaki in combination with Kanda, U.S. Patent No. 4,740,055 and/or Minemoto, U.S. Patent No. 5,699,461. Claims 36 and 46 were indicated as being allowable.

Allowable claims 36 and 46

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating the allowability of claims 36 and 46.

Advisory Action of September 19, 2005

In the Advisory Action, the Examiner correctly pointed out that claim 33 was not amended. This oversight has been corrected, and claim 33 has been amended to recite a thixotropic cladding layer.

In the Advisory Action, the Examiner pointed out that some confusion may arise due to the language of claim 15. Claim 15 has been canceled as being essentially redundant. By way of further clarification, the cladding is thixotropic due to the presence of the nano-particles. The

cladding layer, when made of a thixotropic material, therefore becomes thixotropic. Applicant believes that it is equally correct to say “a thixotropic cladding layer” and “a cladding layer made of a thixotropic material.” For consistency, the phrase “thixotropic cladding layer” is used throughout the claims.

By way of further clarification, hydrophobicity and hydrophilicity are separate properties from thixotropy—in other words, the cladding can be thixotropic because it contains hydrophilic nano-particles, hydrophobic nano-particles, hydrophilic-hydrophobic nano-particles, nano-particles with neutral hydrophobicity/hydrophilicity, etc.

Rejections based on Tsubaki et al.

As discussed previously, Applicants believe that the amendments directed to a **thixotropic** cladding layer overcome the rejections based on Tsubaki, or any combination of Tsubaki with the other cited references. Accordingly, all the pending claims are believed to be in condition for allowance.

New claims 63-66

The newly added claims are directed to the aspects canceled from their respective independent claims. Applicants respectfully submit that the recitation of a thixotropic cladding layer in the independent claims is sufficient to overcome the cited references.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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